

to \$10,000 a year as a tax deduction. Today I recommended that on the bottom of that, if you will, anybody who wanted to would be instead able to take a credit of up to \$1,500 which covers most of the community college tuitions in this country for a community college tuition for one year, no questions asked, and then if they maintained a B average to get it for a second year, which literally would make, instead of 12 years, 14 years of education accessible to every single American in the country. It could revolutionize opportunities for people, and I hope you will support that.

Let me just make one final point. I know we're going into an election season, and we have that every 4 years—really, every 2 years. And on the whole that's a good thing. If it's done right, it gives us a chance to reassess where we are, to debate the differences between us, to have an honest discussion. And it's a very positive thing. But what I'd like to point out is that when we work together up here and do agree on what we have in common and leave our differences to the side, we can do a lot of good things for this country. We adopted a budget, 6 months late, but we adopted a budget which continued to reduce the deficit and continued to meet what I think are our fundamental obligations to the people.

We adopted a telecommunications bill which gave small-business people in the telecommunications area a chance to compete in this brave, new world we are going into and still will create hundreds of thousands of new jobs in the telecommunications area. We adopted a tough antiterrorism bill to deal with one of the biggest law enforcement problems, not only the United States but people all over the world have. Just because we said, look, here's what we agree on. So we don't agree on everything. I gave up what I couldn't get. They gave up what they couldn't get. We passed the bill; we signed it. That's the way the American system is supposed to work.

So I would say to you, I am still committed to getting a balanced budget act. I'm still committed to getting campaign finance reform. And I'm still committed to getting the kinds of targeted tax relief we talked about here tonight that I believe would help to cre-

ate more small businesses and help more small businesses stay in business and help generate more jobs.

I believe this country is in as good a shape to seize the future as any great country in the world. And I believe the best days of this country are still before us. What we have got to do is to recognize that with all of our diversity—you just look around here. Just imagine what the difference in the way this crowd looks today and the way it would 30 or 40 years ago. Just look around this room.

And there is no country in the world as well-positioned for the global economy as we are, managing its diversity as well, giving different people opportunities, and all we've got to do is to figure out that we've just got to keep working together, keep pulling together, and keep going forward. Our best days are still ahead of us, and you and small business are going to lead the way.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:12 p.m. in the Presidential Ballroom at the Capital Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Small Business Person of the Year Phyllis Hannan, first runner-up Terry Anderson, and second runners-up Robert and Laurie Lozano.

## **Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters**

*June 5, 1996*

### **Medicare**

**The President.** Good afternoon. Let me say that I'm looking forward to this opportunity to meet with the House Democratic caucus to talk about the work that we have ahead of us. But before I do, I would like to make one particular point. Of all the issues before us, I would very much like to see the Congress take up and pass a good, clean version of the Kennedy-Kassebaum health care reform bill in the next few days.

Senator Dole has said that he will be leaving the Senate soon, and I respect that decision. But this is one issue that he and I agree on. He very much wants this bill to pass in a good form that I can sign. And I just want to say to him and to all of you that I'm prepared to do whatever it takes in the next few

days to meet with him, do whatever I can, and meet with other Republicans to try to get the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill passed before he leaves the Senate. I think that is something we ought to do for the American people. I know it would mean a lot to him. It would certainly mean a lot to me. And I'm very hopeful that we can prevail in getting that done.

**Q.** Mr. President, the Medicare trustees are reporting today that there was one less year of solvency than originally expected. You have said in the past this should be put off until after the election. Do you still feel it should be put off?

**The President.** No, no, no. No, I haven't said—I'm sorry. Our plan—and by the way, the savings that have been agreed on already by the Republicans and the Democrats in the balanced budget negotiations would put another decade on the Medicare Trust Fund. And I think we ought to do that right away. I have always felt that way.

The plan that I detailed last year included Medicare reductions of \$270 billion, \$170 billion more than the Trust Fund—the trustees said was necessary to go into the Trust Fund to stabilize it.

But the differences in our numbers now are not that dramatic, and the amount that we have agreed on in common would add—would take it out to 10 years, and I think we ought to do that now. I think we ought to—I've always said we should go on and pass the right kind of balanced budget and do that. We can do that now with no trouble. We have agreed on those things. Providers know they're coming. Everybody understands how they would be managed. And I think we ought to do that. We should not wait.

**Q.** [Inaudible]—you all can get together on those. Is that the problem?

**The President.** What?

**Q.** [Inaudible]

**The President.** Well, yes. The problems are, I think far more than the money involved, is the structure of Medicare. I don't favor breaking the structure of Medicare. I think putting the medical savings account for Medicare payments in would be a particularly bad idea. You know, Medicare has the lowest administrative cost of any health in-

surance plan in America, private or public. It has done a basically good job. There are more seniors now on the plan than ever before. We have to deal with the population problems that exist now and the ones that are going to exist in the future.

But we have the ability right now to put 10 years into the life of the Medicare Trust Fund, and we ought to just do it. We ought to just go on and do that. We can do that with no problem, and we can do it in the context of a balanced budget plan.

**Q.** Thank you.

**The President.** Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:50 p.m. at the Longworth House Office Building on Capitol Hill. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

### Statement on the Nomination for Chief of Naval Operations

June 5, 1996

I am pleased to nominate Admiral Jay L. Johnson, U.S. Navy, to be Chief of Naval Operations.

Admiral Johnson currently serves as the Vice Chief of Naval Operations. He brings to the job of Chief of Naval Operations a dynamic vision of the Navy's future, a wealth of operational experience, a decisive leadership style and a deep regard for America's sailors.

During his distinguished career, Admiral Johnson completed two combat cruises in Vietnam and served as the Deputy Commander of Operation Restore Democracy and Uphold Democracy in Haiti. As Commander Second Fleet, he significantly improved the effectiveness of our forces in both multiservice and multinational operations. As Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel, he oversaw the career development of the officer and enlisted community during the challenging post-cold war drawdown.

Admiral Johnson assumes the post of Chief of Naval Operations with the full trust and confidence of the Navy community at a crucial time in its history. I will depend upon him to continue Admiral Mike Boorda's high standards and demanding goals for the Navy. With Admiral Johnson at the helm, I am con-